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The development of an analysis tool to categorize

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The development of an analysis tool to categorize the frame of news media images

by

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ABSTRACT

There has been much discussion within the areas of media effects and journalism that has been focused on the issue of *framing*. Framing occurs when journalists employ various tactics in order to connect to their audience and enhance the understanding of a certain topic or event. These tactics include using particular grammar and vocabulary within the text that sets the tone for the story. The tactics can also include choosing particular visual imagery to engage the reader, although this is rarely discussed within media research. Graphic design research, which includes the study of iconography, semiotics and social semiotics, has determined that images carry vast amounts of information and meaning. This suggests that images can also lead to the promotion of a particular frame. When the frame of the image does not support the frame of the text the audience can receive a confusing or even contradicting message. This study combines media-framing research with that of graphic design in order to determine ways that visual framing can best be identified and analyzed. The result is a categorizing tool that informs the journalist how an image can play a part in the framing of a subject and emphasizes the importance of the decision concerning which image should accompany the text. This categorizing tool, which is proposed in the form of a brochure, guides the journalist through the process of identifying and rating the presence of visual framing components in order to determine whether or not an image is appropriate for the text. This process would be valuable when choosing images prior to print, or as a way of reflecting on how images have been used in past coverage.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

As designers, the meanings and messages embedded in images are especially important. We use graphic elements, such as text, photographs, illustrations and color to create communication messages that are meant to inform or tell a story. Historian Philip Meggs describes the profession as involving the formation of "an intricate communications message while building a cohesive composition that gains order and clarity from the relationships between the elements."[1] Our job is to make messages readable, understandable, as well as memorable. To create resonance within images, or to make them meaningful and memorable, we incorporate various graphic techniques in order to make the overall composition more interesting. What does this do the message? By scaling or cropping an image a certain way does it change its meaning? Does the choice of using a black and white photo cause a different interpretation than using the same photo in color? These questions become increasingly important when looking at images that are meant to inform the public about a person or event in an objective way, such as those published in the news media.

Creating resonance within an audience is a goal of journalists as well, who strive to inform as well as appeal to their readers. They may employ various tactics, such as choosing grammar, vocabulary, or images that attract or relate to the audience. These choices allow the journalist to present a story in many different ways. In media research, how an issue is presented, or *framed*, is an important topic as it can have an effect on the understanding of that issue at the individual, up to the cultural level. However, the discussion of framing is generally focused on the textual components of news content, rarely on the visual imagery. If

[1] Meggs, 1992; pp 1.

images are considered such powerful means of communication within visual research, it seems inadequate to leave them out of the discussion about media framing. This study will combine the research of framing effects within journalism with that of graphic design and visual meaning in order to identify the possible framing elements within media images. This research will then be used to create categorization tool to identify the possible framing elements within an image. This tool could be incorporated into a journalist's process for choosing images to accompany a news story.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Framing

The use of the word "frame" in art and design is similar to its use in research concerning media effects. The word "frame" in art and design typically refers to the physical border that surrounds a particular painting or other visual work and serves as a structure for space, separating the artwork from its surroundings and creating a window into fictional space. This frame can be an integral part of the overall meaning, as it tended to during the 20th century when artists, such as Kurt Schwitters and Piet Mondrian, started to blur the division between the real and imaginary by having the painting extend out of the frame, or even by removing the frame entirely. This frame can also be used to increase the salience of certain elements with in an image, which means to highlight and make them more noticeable. For example the photographic frame, or viewfinder, can focus attention onto one aspect of a scene, effectively eliminating other distractions by cropping them out. These functions of the art and photographic frame are parallel to the functions of the frame in media research, referred to as the "strategy of constructing and processing news discourse."[2]

The topic of framing is widely discussed within the realm of media research. The basic definition of the term *framing* is that certain treatments, decisions, or procedures performed by the communicator—such as a photographer or journalist—increase the salience of, or highlight, certain parts of a text, issue, or concept, much like the viewfinder of the camera can create a frame that highlights a particular small scene occurring within a larger

[2] Pan & Kosicki, 1993; p. 57.

scene.[3] For example, a scene of an angry crowd (Figure 1) can be cropped to highlight a particular girl's apparent emotional distress (Figure 2)

Figure 1. Cropped photo depicts an angry crowd. (Berger, 1989)

Figure 2. Photo cropped to show a woman in distress. (Berger, 1989)

[3] Entman, 1993; pp. 52.

The frame is a "central organizing principle that holds together and gives coherence and meaning to a diverse array of symbols."[4] It creates a kind of 'window' through which the viewer receives information. "A framing effect is said to occur when, in the course of describing an issue or event, a speaker's emphasis on a subset of potentially relevant considerations causes individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions."[5] Another way to put this is to say that "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."[6] Media frames highlight certain pieces of information, thereby increasing the amount of attention paid to those pieces of information.

An example is the Cold War frame, discussed by Entman[7], which was the prevalent issue in the U.S. news concerning foreign affairs during half of the 20th century. This frame *highlighted* civil wars, conflicts, and other foreign events; *interpreted the cause* as communism; offered *moral judgments* about the events; and *recommended solutions* that often involved U.S. support for the non-communist side.[8] Gamson, professor in sociology at Boston College, while looking at how the news media framed the issue of nuclear power over the later part of the 20th century, concluded that the media frame could evolve and shift over time. He found that in the beginning the media framed nuclear power as a technological innovation that would solve all of the world's energy problems—it was a framed as a symbol of "progress". Following the catastrophes at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, this frame

[4] Gamson, 1992; p. 384.
[5] Druckman, 2001; p. 1042.
[6] Entman, 1993; p. 52.
[7] Entman, 1993; p. 51.
[8] Entman, 1993; p. 52.

started to shift towards nuclear energy being labeled as "devil's bargain" – an inexhaustible energy source that would inevitably lead to horrible consequences.[9]

Framing Theory

Beyond the basic definition, the approach to framing research has been labeled a "scattered conceptualization," with no definite and widely accepted approach or method of study.[10] Rather than have a single, universal theory that describes how framing effects work and affect public opinion, researchers have put forth numerous theories that focus on different aspects of the framing process, rather than the whole. This has been deemed beneficial by some, as it creates an active research environment that encourages new studies and theories, which introduces data that allows the revision of the old theories.[11] This active environment is divided into four areas:

1) The investigation of the precursory conditions that produce frames. This theory addresses how certain journalistic procedures or environments produce framing effects. For example, this investigation may look into how a particular culture, such as that of America, may produce a frame for such topics as war in the Middle East, or space exploration that is different from a frame produced by a culture from a poorer country, such as Sudan.

2) The examination of how news frames interact with an individual's prior knowledge, thus affecting interpretations, recall of information and decision-making. News *media frames* interact with the *individual frame.* This interaction can occur in a cycle: "News

[9] Gamson, 1989; pp. 10-31.
[10] Entman, 1993; p. 52.
[11] D'Angelo, 2002; pp. 870

frames interact with the cognitive and social behaviors they have shaped in the first place,"[12] meaning people view news information through their own personal frame based on prior knowledge provided by news information. The individual frame can also be affected by certain cultural factors, such as age and gender, which can create disparities between the media frame and individual frame. When the two frames mesh, the negotiation process that occurs between them helps speed up the interpretation process through the interaction with prior knowledge. When the media frame and individual frame do not mesh, the media frame is rejected.

3) The examination of how news frames shape public policy and opinion. Frames shape public dialogues about political issues, often towards the same perspective of those in power. An example of this area of research is a study conducted by Druckman[13] that showed the power to frame an issue is limited to those who are considered "credible elites" by the public. The study concluded that the public relies on economic or political elites in order to "sort through many possible frames." The public goes to those elites they trust or deem 'credible', and are thus selective to which frames they believe. Druckman[14] found that people are much more likely to believe, or be influenced by statements made by Colin Powell as opposed to statements made by Jerry Springer. This is due to Powell's higher credibility rating among the public. The definition of who is a credible elite may change over time, and can be the reason why public opinion of certain issues, such as nuclear power or war, can change over time.

[12] D'Angelo, 2002; pp. 870
[13] Druckman, 2001; pp. 1041.
[14] Druckman, 2001; pp. 1041.

4) The identification of the thematic units called frames.[15] "News frames are themes within news stories that are carried by various kinds of framing devices. The content of the frame amalgamates textual items (words and images) with the contextual treatment that they receive from framing devices."[16] In other words, certain images and words are seen in a certain context, light, or circumstances, or theme, created by certain framing devices. This is the area of frame research that is most relevant to this study.

The Framing Process

The theories described above focus on different stages of the communication process, a process that starts first with the sender and ends with the receiver. This act of communication has been described in numerous ways by researchers in the field of communication. The classic example is Harold Lasswell's famous question of "who - says what - in which channel - to whom - with what effect?" Berlo expanded this model in 1972 by adding that for successful communication to occur a message must travel from the sender, through a channel, to a receiver. More specifically, a sender, who has a certain 'skill set' comprised of communication skills, attitudes, knowledge, social system, and culture, first composes a message.[17] The components of this message, which work together to produce a certain effect and relate to the frame's signifying elements discussed later, include the following: informational or emotional *content*; *elements* such as individual words, sounds or colors; the *structure*, or how the elements are put together; the *treatment*, which includes the style or subjective decisions; and the *code*, which includes what kind of grammar,

[15] D'Angelo, 2002; pp. 873
[16] D'Angelo, 2002; pp. 873
[17] Morgan, 1986; pp. 10.

vocabulary, alphabet, or overall language is used. This message goes through some type of channel, such as print, television or radio, to the receiver. From here, the message is interpreted by being processed through the receiver's own skill set. For successful communication to occur, the skill sets of the sender, called the *media frame* in media research, and receiver, or the *individual frame*, must match up. "They have to use the same language or code, and they have to use words or signs in the same way."[18] Within this communication process, framing can occur 1) at the communicator, 2) in the message, or 3) at the receiver (reader/viewer). 4 and in the overall culture.

1) First, framing can occur with the communicator—the journalist, reporter, media, etc. who makes a conscious or unconscious decision of what to say based on his or her 'schemata,' or belief system.[19] This belief system, which can include a person's habits or tendencies, is often dependent on "journalistic professional routines and conventions used to encode and interpret information in a way so as to aid the viewer's interpretation process."[20] These journalistic routines, which include using certain sources, channels for information, certain language or discourse, or certain methods of describing news events, aid the news reporter or photographer when performing his or her job, but it can lead to inadvertent framing, at least from the journalist's perspective. Journalists often rely on these routines in order to increase efficiency. By continually relying on the same source for news, the journalist is essentially disseminating only that source's viewpoint, or frame, to the public.[21] This frame could eventually set the political agenda of the general public. The source, in effect, determines what the problem is, what information is important, how that information

[18] Morgan, 1986; pp. 10.
[19] Entman, 1993; pp. 52.
[20] Gamson et al, 1992; pp. 376.
[21] Gamson, 1992; pp. 376.

should be evaluated, and what an acceptable solution should be.[22] This frame can serve as a method to direct attention towards a certain perspective, as well as limit the range of perspectives available to the viewer.[23] Extreme cases of this can be seen in countries whose government has direct control over the media, the most infamous perhaps being Hitler's Nazi regime, which employed newspapers, film, and other media outlets to disseminate their message. This message was carefully sculpted and framed to support the ideals and goals of the party. Often these government-maintained frames are challenged by revolutionary news outlets, who use certain language and images in an effort to negatively frame those in power.[24]

2) The second location at which framing can occur is within the message. Decisions made by the communicator, or journalist, on how to present this message, such as whether to describe an event with a metaphor or catchphrase, can create a certain motif or theme. The central theme or idea of a particular story is constructed using "the structural relations and functions of the various signifying elements."[25] These signifying elements, which include words, phrases, and images, are recognizable and can be experienced; they can be arranged or consciously manipulated by the communicator. These signifying elements "make a frame communicable through the news media."[26] The way in which these signifying elements are organized and presented creates a kind of window, or *frame*, through which a particular news story can be viewed. The elements set the parameters of the frame, or put the frame into terms the reader can understand.

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[22] Entman, 1993; pp. 53.
[23] Pan & Kosicki, 1993; pp. 56.
[24] Sturken, 2001; pp. 131.
[25] Pan & Kosicki, 1993; pp. 59.
[26] Pan & Kosicki, 1993; pp. 59.

These signifying elements, which make up the message, follow certain shared rules and conventions.[27] The text can contain certain kinds of language, key words, phrases, sources, or other elements often determined by journalistic standards and conventions.[28] In an image, the signifying elements are the visual equivalent of the textual components of words and phrases—the portrayed subjects and their methods of portrayal, the social distance between these subjects and the image viewer, and certain symbols or icons portrayed – often referred to as the 'image text' in literature on visual semiotics. These signifying elements, or framing devices, whether visual or verbal, can be broken into four structural dimensions: a) *syntactical, b) script, c) rhetorical,* and *d) thematic*.[29]

a) Pan and Kosicki[30] describe the *syntactical* structure as the "stable patterns of the arrangement of words or phrases into sentences," which is similar in nature to the elements component, or basic features such as words, sounds and colors, described in Berlo's communication model. Pan and Kosicki[31] describe the syntactical dimension as including the headlines, lead sentences and body text, which each hold a different amount of signifying power. At the top of the hierarchy, and thus holding the most signifying power, is the headline, followed by the lead sentence, then the body text. The headline has the most signifying power because it attracts the viewer to the story, triggering memories, attitudes and beliefs. The headline often serves as a short description or synopsis of the story and can frame the interpretation of the text that follows. Evidence of this is provided by a study

[27] Pan & Kosicki, 1993; pp. 59.
[28] Entman, 1993; pp. 52
[29] Pan and Kosicki, 1993; pp. 58-62
[30] Pan and Kosicki, 1993; pp. 58-62
[31] Pan and Kosicki, 1993; pp. 58-62

performed by Percy H. Tannenbaum[32], a member of the research staff of the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois. Tannenbaum found that two different headlines, each attached to the same body copy, have different effects or lead to different impressions about the news article. "The headline has a most definite effect on the interpretation of the story."[33] The next component in the hierarchy is the lead, which is meant to give the "newsworthy angle", suggesting "a particular perspective to view the event reported."[34] Following the lead, at the bottom of the hierarchy, is the body text, which can contain quotes from experts, authoritative sources, and empirical data.[35]

While the research on signifying elements does not include images as syntactical structures, it should be noted here that related research suggests they be mentioned. According to Eye-Trac research conducted in the 1990s, which studied the eye movement patterns of newspaper readers by attaching miniature video cameras to their head, newspaper images, whether photographs or illustrations, should be placed above headlines in the hierarchy described above. Their research found that the photograph served as the link between the reader's eye and was the consistently the "point of entry", or the location that the eye moved towards first. In some cases, the photograph did "share the role" with headlines. It was found that 75 percent of the photos on a page were "processed", meaning the eye stopped long enough to take in information. Due to its priority in the reading process, an image, like a headline, may have certain framing effects.[36]

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[32] Tannenbaum, 1953: pp. 189.
[33] Tannenbaum, 1953; pp. 196.
[34] Pan and Kosicki, 1993; pp. 59.
[35] Pan and Kosicki, 1993: pp. 59.
[36] Garcia, 1991; pp. 25.

b) The *script* structure is an internalized sequence of steps used in order to make sense of a particular event.[37] For example, the classic journalistic procedure of capturing the 'who, what, when, where, why, and how' is a generic example of a script often used in news reporting. This is similar to the process a speaker goes through to determine which code, or grammar, vocabulary, and language to use when speaking to another. It defines how one communicates with another. The relationship between a reporter and the news story is not far removed from an author and a fictional story, as news stories often have a beginning, climax, and ending.[38]

c) *Rhetorical* structures, which are related to Berlo's 'treatment' or subjective components of a message, are the "stylistic choices made by journalists in relation to their intended effects."[39] These stylistic choices include metaphors, descriptions of the 'ideal', catchphrases, representations, and visual images, which serve as a means to create a certain theme or tone. The use of rhetorical structures extends beyond the intent to deliver solely the factual content of a story and is pushing the line between the desire to inform and the desire to persuade. The rhetorical structures within images for an event could include the choice of subject, angle, lens or lens filter used, whether to print in black and white or color, and whether to utilize darkroom or PhotoShop techniques to make a certain aspect of the event more salient.

d) The final dimension, the *thematic* structure, is the 'gist', or overall topic of the message. This topic is often set by the headline and backed up by the following text in a

[37] Pan & Kosicki, 1993; pp. 60.
[38] Pan & Kosicki, 1993; pp. 60.
[39] Pan & Kosicki, 1993; pp. 61.

hypothesis-like nature.[40] Often a statement is made, perhaps in the headline, and then empirical evidence in the form of quotes and data is used to back up the claim. Often, to create an aspect of human interest and "psychological proximity" to the audience, journalists start with a "vivid [mental] image or concrete case" that connects with the reader and then work their way towards a conclusion that "functions like an empirical generalization."[41] The theme assigned to a particular message can vary from reader to reader as each individual may find different information more important, but it can be "signaled by [the journalist] in several ways, so that the [reader] is able to make a quick guess about the first or major topic." The evidence from Tannebaum (1953) described above suggests that this first guess and first impression of the story can have an important influence on how the rest of the message is received by the reader.

3) The receiver's own personal schema, or belief system, is the third location where frame effects can occur. They are the "mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information."[42] This personal frame can differ from that of the communicator, meaning that a frame initiated by the communicator, or exposed by a researcher, is not necessarily the same frame utilized by the receiver. A receiver's prior ideas about an issue may influence the way s/he interpret a story, regardless of the way it is presented. Because of this interaction between the frame and the memory, it is more appropriate to refer to the viewer as the 'reader' rather than the 'audience'.[43] The term 'audience' implies a passive act of viewing by a group of people who receive the exact same message. However, no two individuals share the exact same context, background, or personal

[40] Pan & Kosicki, 1993; pp. 60-61.
[41] Pan & Kosicki, 1993; pp. 60.
[42] Entman, 1993; pp. 53.
[43] Gamson, 1992; pp. 388.

experience, all factors within the interpretation process. The term 'reader,' which implies an active viewing, would therefore be a more suitable term to describe the viewer.[44]

4) The fourth location for frame effects to occur is within the overall culture, or belief system of a group of people or community. News frames can shape public policy and opinion, but the opposite can also occur—public policy can shape news frames. The goal of the journalist is to communicate with their readers. In order to do this, often journalists borrow from popular cultural themes, such as common stories, myths, and folk tales, in order to increase resonance, the evoking of images, memories, and emotions, within the readers. "Certain [journalistic] packages have a natural advantage because their ideas and language resonate with larger cultural themes. Resonances increase the appeal of a package; they make it appear natural and familiar."[45]

These four locations at which framing occur can be narrowed down to simply two broad frames—the *media frame* and the *individual frame*. The media frame includes the beliefs and journalistic procedures followed by the journalist, as well as the message he or she creates. This message tends to highlight, or increase salience of, certain aspects of an event or story. This message then is subjected to the audience, or the individual frame. Here, the beliefs, values, and cultural influences of an individual interpret the frame offered by the media. Like communication between two speakers, as illustrated by Berlo's model described above, if the two frames coincide, or mesh, the media frame is accepted. If they do not, the frame is rejected.

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[44] Gamson, 1992; pp. 388.
[45] Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; pp. 5.

The Signifying Elements of Visual Images

While the meaning of images is not specifically addressed in the framing literature, they can be examined in this context. For example, through research in the fields of semiotics, graphic design, social semantics, and iconography, we can consider images as containing signifying elements.

Semiotics

The signifying elements within text, discussed above, serve as framing devices because they "make a frame communicable through the news media."[46] They have been described as elements within the text that convey a certain meaning to the reader. This conveyance of meaning is studied in the field of *semiotics*. Broadly defined, semiotics is the study of 'signs', or "anything which 'stands for' something else."[47] These signs are in the form of words, sounds, gestures, and images. The study of signs stems from two varying theories proposed by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who called it "Semiology", and American philosopher Charles Sander Peirce, who called it "Semiotics". These two studied independently, but are often credited with co-founding the area of study that borrows from both theories, and uses the overarching term of "Semiotics". When the related work of French cultural theorist Roland Barthes was translated into English in the 1960s, semiotics became a major component of cultural studies.[48]

The two theorists Peirce and Saussure presented two separate, but similar, definitions of 'sign', which can take the form of words, colors, images, sounds or gestures. Peirce states

[46] Pan & Kosicki, 1993; pp. 59.
[47] Chandler, 2002; pp. 2
[48] Chandler, 2002; pp. 2

that a sign is made up of a form or *representamen*; that carries a message, or *interpretant*; and refers to an *object*. A red stoplight (the representamen) says 'stop' (the interpretant) to vehicles (the object). This can be represented in a triangle shaped diagram. Figure 3 is an example that substitutes more familiar terms for Peirce's: the representamen is the form or sign vehicle (A); the interpretant is the message or sense (B); and the object is what is referred to—the referent (C). The dotted line between A and C is meant to indicate that there is not always a direct or observable relationship between the sign vehicle and the referent.[49]

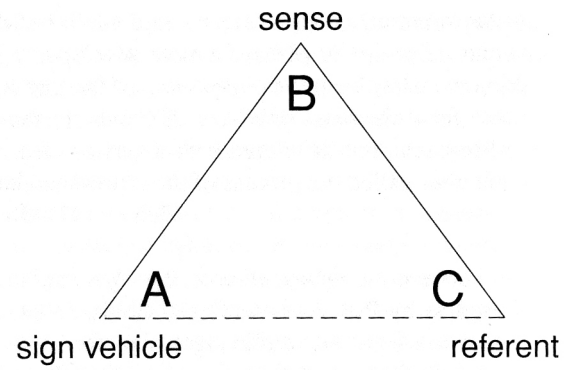

Figure 3. Peirce's semiotic triangle. (Chandler, 2002)

Saussure defined the sign a little differently. Saussure, a scholar in linguistcs, defined a sign as being a link between two elements: a "sound pattern," or a "hearer's psychological impression of a sound,"[50] is called the *signifier;* and the concept, meaning or message called the *signified.* For example, the words "In" on a store's front door is the sound pattern, or signifier; the signified is this is the door for people entering the store. Saussure's version of semiotics was originally an internal process – the signifier was an impression of a sound

[49] Chandler, 2002; pp. 2
[50] Chandler, 2002; pp. 18.

within an individual's mind. This can be represented by Figure 4. Today, the signifier tends to take on a more material nature and refers to an object's physical form.[51]

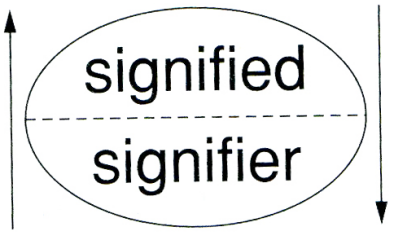

Figure 4. Saussure's semiotic model. (Chandler, 2002)

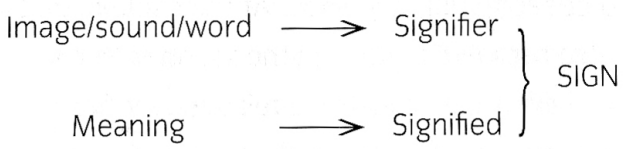

Figure 5. Barthes' semiotic model. (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001)

Barthes expanded on the concept of the signifier and signified by adding more layers of meaning, which he defined as denotation, connotation, and linguistic. The denotative layer is the basic, sometimes defined as the literal, meaning of elements. It is the layer that is uniformly recognized by people from varying backgrounds. Signifiers, such as lines, shapes and colors, carry their signifieds, and together make up the denotative signs. These denotative signs can be images, sounds or words. These make up the signifiers of the connotative layer (Figure 5). The signified of the connotative layer is the deeper, more complex message of the denotative sign that relies on cultural and contextual background

[51] Chandler, 2002; pp. 18.

such as age, gender, education level, as well as how often a particular kind of visual has been viewed. For example, in Figure 6 the denotation *signifiers* would include the lines, shapes and colors that combine to make up the denotation *signified,* or the basic forms and objects present—there are six people, with dark skin, in uniforms, with guns, which are raised in the air. These denotative signs—six people with dark skin, in uniforms, with guns—make up the signifiers of the connotative layer. These signifiers may connote victorious African soldiers to a typical American for a number of reasons: 1) they are all black men, a group of individuals that usually not expected to be in an army from Eastern or Middle Eastern countries such as South Korea, China, India, or Iraq. They are also considered a minority in much of the western world. For example, a group of American soldiers may be expected to have at least one white or Hispanic soldier in the group. 2) Their disassociation with the western military is further supported by their headwear. The United States and British army, perhaps the two most frequently viewed western military groups in the United States press, have relatively standard uniforms that include protective helmets. The absence of these connote that these soldiers may be from a poorer region—such as Africa. The type of headwear worn, head wraps and berets, also gives a clue that these soldiers are African. Head wear like these are more often attributed to the customs of countries located in hot regions. 3) The matching camouflage uniforms, which are various shades of green and brown, indicate that these men are probably of some organized military unit, but once again reinforce their 'non-Western-ness'. The U.S. and British military is currently involved in conflicts in the Middle-Eastern desert regions and are currently wearing beige, sand-colored camouflage to match. They are not currently wearing green uniforms. The sense of victory is connoted because 4) they are relaxed and happy—the man in the right foreground is slouching, the

three faces that can be seen are all smiling—meaning that they are not on high alert or in the midst of combat; and 5) their rifles are raised in the air, which is a celebratory salute seen in many westerns and military movies.

Figure 6. Example news image. (BBC News, 2007)

The denotative and connotative layers never exist alone. There is no such thing as a purely denotative or literal message; "even if a totally 'naïve' image were to be achieved, it would immediately join the sign of naïveté and be completed by a third, symbolic, message." [52] The denotative layer does not exist without the connotation, but, for the purpose of analysis, it can be looked at by itself. The denotative layer can be mentally stripped from connotation revealing a purely objective message, which Barthes determined as the "first degree of intelligibility." [53] Some visual messages can be more denotatively 'pure' than others. For example, a drawing is less pure than a photograph. A drawing consists of "rule-governed

[52] Barthes, 1977; pp. 35.
[53] Barthes, 1977; pp. 34.

transpositions," that are often historical—meaning there are methods, such as simulating perspective or depth, of recreating a scene on paper. A drawing does not reproduce everything seen by the natural eye, as the artist selects what he or she puts down on paper, while the camera lens does not discriminate. A drawing also has a particular style of execution, which in itself constitutes a connotation. For example, both Figures 7 and 8 are sketches of the human form, but each have a different connotation based on the line style used. Figure 7 uses long, sweeping strokes that connote graceful and elegant movements. Figure 8 uses short, scrambled strokes connoting tension and stress. All signifying elements, whether they are syntactical or rhetorical in nature, consist of both denotation and connotation, which leads to their framing effect.

The third level of meaning, the linguistic, almost always accompanies media images. This layer is closely related to the topic of media framing, as it consists of the text, often in the form of captions, headlines, and body copy, which accompanies the image and guides the viewer towards a certain interpretation. The function of the

Figure 7. Long, sweeping strokes. (Bro, 1978.)

Figure 8. Short, scrambled strokes. (Bro, 1978.)

linguistic message when interpreting images is to provide *anchorage* and *relay* of the meaning.

Anchorage is the more common of the two functions of the linguistic message. Every visual message contains many messages or meanings that the reader can choose to either acknowledge or ignore. Which messages are acknowledged and which are ignored may vary from viewer to viewer, resulting in an inconsistent viewing of an image between individuals. The linguistic message fixes, or anchors, the viewing and interpretation. It aids the viewer in "choosing the correct level of perception" and focuses their attention and understanding. "The text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others… It remote-controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance." [54] Because of this controlling nature of the text, it has a "repressive" value towards the "liberty of the signifieds of the image," [55] thus narrowing the range of meaning for that image. For example, the caption accompanying Figure 9 states, "Takuo Toda, head of Japan Origami Airplane Association, folds a space shuttle-shaped paper plane." This text helps in anchoring the identity of the subject as Takuo Toda, that he is in the process of folding an airplane (as opposed to unfolding it, sketching it, or some other action) and that this paper airplane is in the shape of a space shuttle (as opposed to another shape, such as a jet plane).

[54] Barthes, 1977; pp. 38.
[55] Barthes, 1977; pp. 38.

Figure 9. "Takuo Toda, head of Japan Origami Airplane Association, folds a space shuttle-shaped paper plane." (CNN, 2008)

While text can serve the function of anchorage, which narrows down the possible meanings within an image, it can also serve the function of *relay* and contribute meaning from outside the image. The function of *relay,* which occurs less frequently than anchorage, happens when the text and image complement one another, such as in film, cartoons and comic strips when the text adds additional meaning to the images.[56] The text, like the image, is made up of fragments which, when read together with the image, make up a greater level of meaning. For example, Figure 10 is of the side of a Comcast service van. The caption accompanying the image states, "Comcast had been accused of blocking file-sharing connections and making itself gatekeeper of the Internet" (CNN). This caption reinforces the fact that the image is of a Comcast van, but it adds additional meaning by stating that the company faces accusations of serving as a kind of "gatekeeper of the Internet."(CNN)

[56] Barthes, 1977; pp. 38.

Figure 10. "Comcast had been accused of blocking file-sharing connections and making itself gatekeeper of the Internet." (CNN, 2008)

Iconography

Iconography, an area of visual research founded by Erwin Panofsky, is related to the theories of visual semiotics and attempts to objectively determine the 'original' meaning of art. Inspired by models in literary studies, Panofsky wished to understand a piece of art "within the conceptual framework of the historical period in which it was produced." It focused on the relationship of form and content, and was meant to serve as a universal method of interpretation with which all works from all ages could be analyzed and interpreted according to their respective moment in history.[57] Panofsky's method of interpretation opened up new levels of meaning in art. He revealed motifs and symbolic content that was previously unknown. Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Marriage* was thought to have been a "marvelous naturalistic image,"[58] but when Panofsky's method was applied to it

[57] Moxey, 1986: pp. 267.
[58] Moxey, 1989; pp. 270.

was revealed that it was loaded with allegorical and symbolic content. Though Panofsky used his method to apply to historical art, it can be applied to more contemporary pieces, though perhaps more likely to advertising images than those in the news.

According to Panofsky, a work of art has three layers of meaning: the *pre-iconographic*, the *iconographic*, and the *iconological*. The *pre-iconographic* refers to the primary or natural subject matter also referred to as object-signs, which is similar to the denotative meaning.[59] To use Panofsky's example, consider a photo of a man tipping his hat to another while passing by on the sidewalk. The man nods and smiles in return. This interaction is based on a symbolic gesture—the man in the hat is greeting the passerby. The passerby recognized the gesture as a greeting by interpreting it through his knowledge from past experiences and then acted accordingly. Panofsky used this scenario to explain how one can decode a work of art. When looking at an image, our recognition of what is represented is based on our practical experience, taking into account the stylistic conventions and the technical transformations involved in the representation. Such conventions and transformations include the translation of the 3D world into two dimensions in photography, and that a figure in medieval painting that appears to be in midair or hovering is not necessarily indicate the paranormal. In Van Leeuwen (2001) and Hermerén, this refers to the representational meaning and "can often be paraphrased with 'picture of.'" [60]

Van Leeuwen, following Hermerén, outlines five ways that an image form's representation is identified. 1) The first is that a title, or text, indicates what is depicted. This is similar to the anchorage function of Barthes' linguistic meaning. 2) Second is that the

[59] Panofsky, 1991.
[60] Hermerén, 1969; pp. 24.

identification is based from personal experience—in historical art this is often limited to objects and buildings that have withstood the tests of time. 3) The third is confirming identification using research. If an image incorporates objects that are no longer in use within the viewer's culture, it will take some research in order to discover what the significance of these objects is. 4) The fourth way to establish the identity is through the reference to other pictures, or 'visual intertextuality'. This is common in the media, which often is saturated by multiple images surrounding the current hot news topic. 5) The final way identity can be established is from verbal descriptions. For example, the representation of St. Joseph was often based on "attributes of his trade, a description clearly based on what is written about him in the Gospels." [61]

The *iconographic*, also referred to as *iconographical symbolism,* [62] is similar to the connotation previously discussed, as it refers to the ideas and concepts, or stories and allegories, attached to the object signs. In order to correctly interpret these ideas and concepts, the interpreter needs to be aware of the literary references. Extensive research of the time period surrounding the creation of the artwork is required. One must be aware that in Renaissance painting a man holding a knife is St. Bartholomew, or that a the photo of a man tipping his hat is left over from the days of knights in armor and indicates a friendly greeting. In medieval times, a knight would lift his visor or completely remove his helmet in order to demonstrate his peaceful intent. This custom would not be obvious to those from other parts of the world, so knowledge of the culture would be necessary for these people from other areas of the world to understand the action as a greeting.

[61] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 106.
[62] Hermerén, 1969; pp. 26.

The symbolism described above is referred to by Panofsky as open symbolism.[63] An open symbol is one that should not naturally be in the composition, or that there is not "naturalistic excuse for its presence in the image."[64] There are a number of clues that certain forms within a composition are open symbols, or should be read symbolically:[65]

1. Attention is called to symbolic forms due to the significant detail or care applied to its depiction, or it is made more salient using lighting or contrast.
2. Subjects in the composition are physically pointing at the symbolic form.
3. The symbolic form seems out of place in the composition.
4. The symbolic forms contradict the laws of nature.

Open symbols are commonly found in western painting. Figure 11, Jacopino del Conte's *Annunciation to Zachariah,* the positioning of the crowd on either side, but not in front of, the man in robes on the stairs increases his salience, suggesting he should be read symbolically. This is further enhanced by the number of figures within the crowd gesturing and pointing towards him.

[63] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 109.
[64] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 109.
[65] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 108.

Figure 11. Example of an open symbol. (Hall, Marcia B.,1992)

Disguised symbols, or those that do have a "naturalistic excuse" to appear in a composition are harder to identify and can often be contestable. These symbols sometimes occur unconsciously, only exposed by the critic. An example of this is Van Leeuwen's account of Nederveen Pieterse's analysis of depiction of blacks in fruit advertisements. Pieterse (in Van Leeuwen, 2001) states that blacks in the West Indies were historically depicted as lazy, unambitious, and that the image of fruit, abundant in the West Indies, represented this "natural laziness".[66] This connotation of fruit also was present in American folklore, for example Blacks were thought to have an uncontrollable appetite for watermelon, a fruit that symbolizes gluttony and lack of control.[67] This is evident in images from the early 1900s (Figure 12 and Figure 13) This connotation could also be found in more contemporary advertisements, such as in Figure 14.

[66] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 111.
[67] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 111.

Figure 12. Historical example of disguised symbol. (van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001)

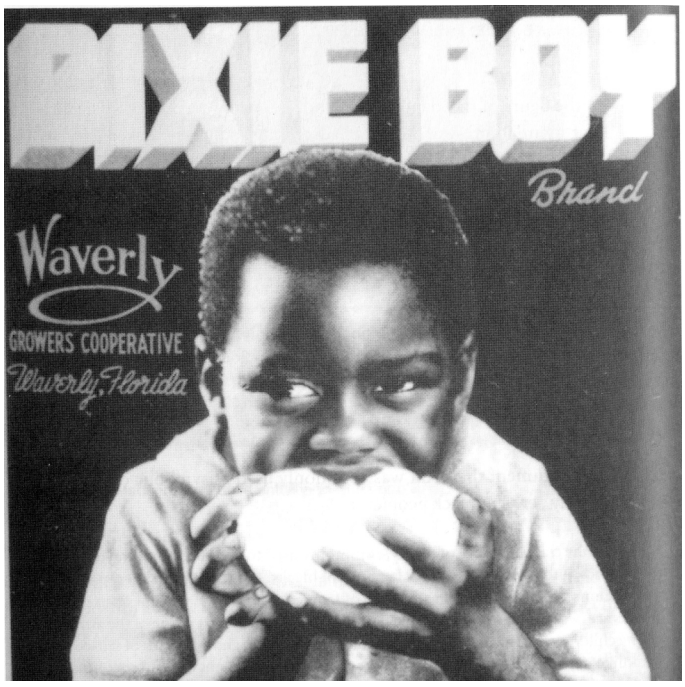

Figure 13. Historical example of disguised symbol. (van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001)

Figure 14. More recent example of disguised symbol. (van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001)

The *Iconological*, the third level of interpretation, refers to the fact that art is often a 'symptom' of something else. It looks at the intrinsic meaning or symbolical values of the work of art.[68] Interpretation of this level seeks to reveal the general attitude of a nation, class, or period by looking at underlying principles that may be unbeknownst to the artist. The iconological level of the man tipping his hat would reveal the man's personality, though not from this one gesture. An accurate description of the man's personality would require multiple observations of several similar actions combined with general knowledge of his social standing, nationality, period, and so on.[69]

[68] Panofsky, 1974; pp. 108.
[69] Ibid 68.

Although framing research has limited visual images to the rhetorical dimension of the signifying elements, images themselves hold a vast number of signifying elements that can also be divided into each of the four dimensions of syntactical, thematic, script, and rhetorical. Each dimension consists of certain denotations that can connote a certain meaning, thus functioning as a framing device.

As previously described, the *syntactical dimension* in the textual sense is described as the journalist's arrangement of the basic text units of words and phrases into various patterns in order to create the sentences that make up the headlines, lead sentences and body text. In design, these basic units are not words and phrases, but rather are the visual elements that are arranged in a certain way to create the final image. These elements may include dots, lines, shapes, volume, colors and recognizable images.

Elements and Principles of Visual Organization

Dot, Line and Shape

The most basic visual element is the dot, which is a "small circular point in space," [70] When multiple dots are combined together they can form more recognizable elements, such as lines, shapes, and recognizable images. A line can be defined as a series of dots that are indistinguishable from one another. They can be drawn or formed by the edge of a shape.[71] Lines can help direct the eye throughout the composition. Lines can carry significant meaning: low, horizontal lines can connote a horizon; diagonal lines can create excitement or be stimulating; curved lines connote playfulness and movement; thick, dark lines connote

[70] Berger, 1989; pp. 42.
[71] Berger, 1989; pp. 42.

strength and confidence; thin, light lines appear delicate and timid.[72] Lines can also be arranged in such a way as to create an outline for shapes such as: a triangle, which is made of three lines; a circle, which is a single curved line made of dots all equidistant from a central point; or a square, which is made up of four lines equal in length and at right angles to one another.[73] These shapes can carry with them significant meaning. For example, a square or rectangle, which can be stacked and aligned in geometrical patterns much like building blocks, alludes to mechanics and technology, order and straightness. A triangle is also angular like the rectangle and can carry a mechanical connotation, but it can also point in a direction and convey action, conflict and tension. The circle often connotes a more organic nature and can represent endlessness, warmth, and protection.[74] According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), these connotations of shapes can be reinforced by objects we experience everyday. For example, buildings, desks, cubicles, are rectangular in shape and all connote order and mechanics. The moon, sun and leaves are all curved in shape, and connote nature and organics. When these shapes extend into visual space, or have visual depth, they are said to have volume. Most of the world we see has volume, or is in three dimensions. In an artwork or photograph, which contain figures that are technically two-dimensional, the mind can be 'tricked' into thinking figures are in three dimensions. This can be done using line and perspective, discussed later, or by using color.[75]

[72] Lester, 2000; pp. 32.
[73] Berger, 1989; pp. 43.
[74] Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; pp. 52.
[75] Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; pp. 52.

Figure 15. Color variation can create a feeling of depth. (Vero,1980)

Color

Subtle color variations in images can create a feeling of depth. For example, in Figure 15, the dimensionality of the boxes, chairs, basket, and other objects depicted in the image is created by variations in color. Color involves how a particular object absorbs or reflects light. An object that reflects all light appears white, while an object that absorbs all light appears black. All other colors fall in-between the two extremes. There are a number of attributes that are associated with color: *hue, saturation, value,* and *warmth* or *coolness*. The term 'hue'

refers to what people normally refer to as the ‘color’. For example, the primary hues include red, yellow, and blue. Saturation is the strength of the color. For example Figure 16 has intense color, or high saturation, while Figure 17 has more subdued color, or low saturation. Value refers to the “tonal gradations”, or lightness and darkness of a color. Warmth and coolness are terms that can describe certain colors. When one refers to ‘warm colors’, one is usually referring to yellows, oranges, and reds. When one refers to ‘cool colors’, one is usually referring to blues and greens.[76]

Using a dominant color that is warm, or one that is cool, can create separate kinds of moods or appeal to the senses. A photograph with a warm dominant color may create a mood that is lively and exciting, while a cool color may seem subdued or gentle. Color can also create a sense of drama, impact, or vitality. A primarily subdued color palette, perhaps of cool blues and greens can become much more dynamic with a touch of a contrasting red. This red color has a large amount of impact due to its contrast, and can draw the attention of the eye.

Figure 16. Example of high saturation (BBC News)

Figure 17. Example of Low Saturation (BBC News)

[76] Berger, 1989; pp. 43.

Colors can also communicate with a viewer by triggering mental associations within his or her mind. These color associations, based on social and cultural background, result in various connotations for individual colors. For example, red, often associated with the sun and heat, can carry various connotations such as love, passion, aggression, emergency and fear. Orange can connote enthusiasm, adventure, and cheerfulness. Yellow can connote hope, playfulness, or hazard and danger. Green can connote life, freshness, luck and money. Blue can connote authority, truth and wisdom. Purple can connote royalty, luxury and spirituality. Black can connote reliability, wisdom and power. White can connote purity, innocence, cleanliness and truthfulness. Because a color's connotation is based on personal and cultural associations, these color associations are not universal, but rather are culture specific.[77]

Gestalt Theory

When a viewer looks at an image, he or she does not initially look at individual lines, dots or colors, but rather groups them together to form a whole; this is the basis of Gestalt theory. According to this important theory, the brain is "continually involved in an organizing, simplifying, and unifying process that produces a comprehensible and harmonious whole." [78] The eye or brain, however, has a limited capacity for separate elements, dependent on visual differences, similarities, and position – too many elements and the image may appear confusing or unorganized. Such images, when not unified and harmonious, face the threat of being passed over by the viewer. If the image creator wants to achieve a unified and harmonious composition, and thus avoid the threat of creating an image

[77] Klimchuck, 2006; pp. 106-108.
[78] Cheatham, 1987; pp. 2.

that is ignored, they must employ the basic compositional principles that help to organize the elements into a harmonious whole.

Compositional Principles

The compositional principles direct how the visual elements of dots, lines, shapes and colors are positioned on a page. They provide a structure that can create unity and harmony. These principles include *emphasis, contrast, deletion* (*cropping*)*, balance, repetition, proximity, scale, perspective* and *similarity*.

Emphasis refers to how attention is drawn to a particular object or shape within the composition. This can be done using visual elements, such as line, shape and color, and by using compositional principles, such as perspective, scale, or contrast. Emphasis, or creating a "point of interest", creates an effective composition by highlighting a single component and making a "single statement."[79] Compositions that do not have a single point of interest can appear busy or confusing.

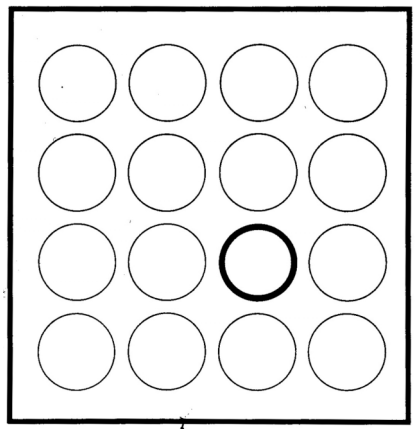

Figure 18. Example of Emphasis (Stoops, 1983)

[79] Hedgecoe, 1978; pp 68.

Contrast refers to two opposites interacting with each other. This can occur with shapes, directions, and color. Contrast of shapes, such as pairing curvilinear shapes with rectangular shapes, can create visual activity or drama. Contrast of direction, where two subjects in a photograph are facing or moving towards opposite directions, can create a tension or feeling of opposition. Contrast of color can create a visual separation between elements, such as between a subject and the background.[80]

Figure 19. Contrast of Scale (Cheatham, 1987)

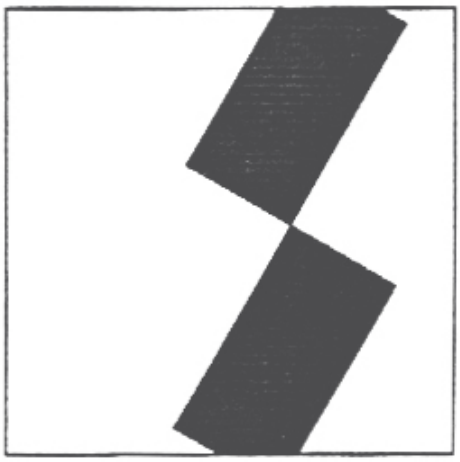

Figure 20. Contrast of direction creates a tension between the two objects (Morgan, 1986)

Deletion is defined as eliminating the nonessential components of a composition. This elimination can create a simplified composition that communicates more successfully. One method of deletion often used in photography is *cropping*, which is the physical 'blocking

[80] Cheatham, 1987; pp. 90

out' of compositional elements by manipulating the photo's frame. This is a conscious decision by the photographer, artist, or designer that can remove excess or confusing information as well as focus attention or emphasize certain forms or subjects.[81]

Figure 21. Cropping can result in multiple compositions. (Berger, 1989)

Balance is "the design or arrangement of parts in a whole grouping that creates a feeling of equilibrium or equality."[82] It refers to the way visual components are organized to create a feeling of stability, as in symmetrical balance where objects are arranged equally on both sides of the axis; or excitement and energy, as in asymmetrical balance where one side

[81] Berger, 1989; pp. 74.
[82] Wallschlaeger & Busic Snyder, 1992; pp. 373.

is deliberately overloaded. Placing the horizon line in the absolute middle of a composition creates a static composition, while moving it to the bottom or top can increase the dynamic. The common suggestion to achieve dynamic balance is called the 'rule of thirds', which divides the composition into three parts.

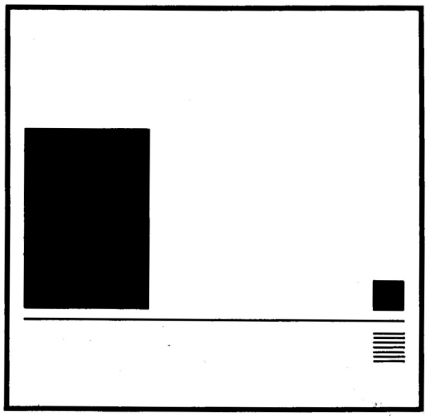

Figure 22. Asymmetrical Balance
(Stoops, 1983)

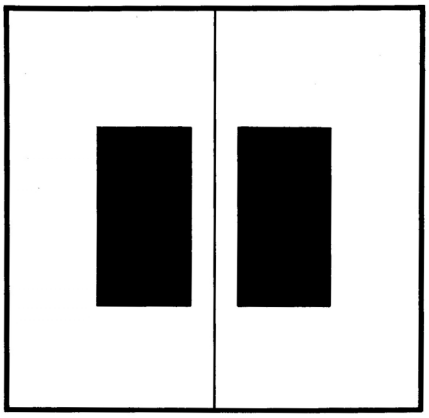

Figure 23. Symmetrical Balance
(Stoops, 1983)

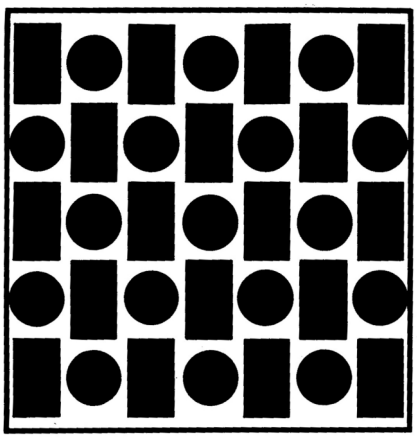

Figure 24. Repetition
(Stoops, 1983)

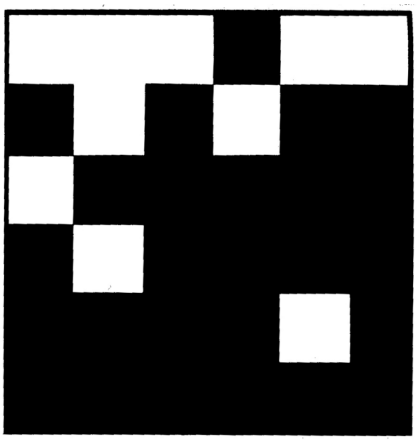

Figure 25. Repetition
(Stoops, 1983)

Repetition is when an individual visual component, such as a shape, size, color, or direction, is used more than once. Repetition can create rhythm, continuity, and strength. It

can also be monotonous or boring if it is not broken up or deviated from through some type of contrast or anomaly.[83]

Proximity refers to where visual components are positioned in relation to each other. By changing the amount of space between elements, different effects can be achieved. Components with a large amount of space between them are seen as separate, perhaps distant from each other, while components with very little space between them are visually grouped together. Components that are visually touching or overlapping one another often become attached together, or even form a larger unified hole.[84]

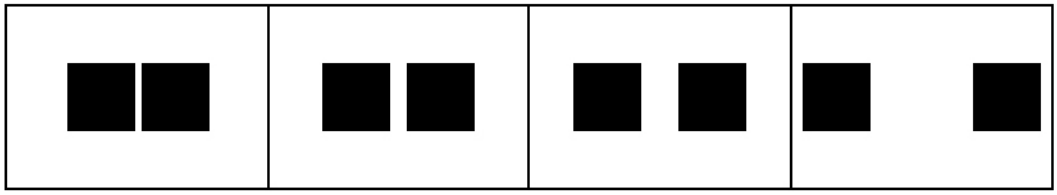

Figure 26. Example of proximity (Morgan, 1986)

Scale refers to the change in size between two objects or shapes in a composition. Scale allows us to make size relationships; for example having a person stand next to a redwood tree allows us to appreciate the tree's magnificent size. Scale can carry emotional impact, as a small space may make us feel trapped or confined, while a very large space may make us feel tiny and insignificant.[85]

[83] Morgan, 1986; pp. 6
[84] ibid 83.
[85] Berger, 1989; pp. 44.

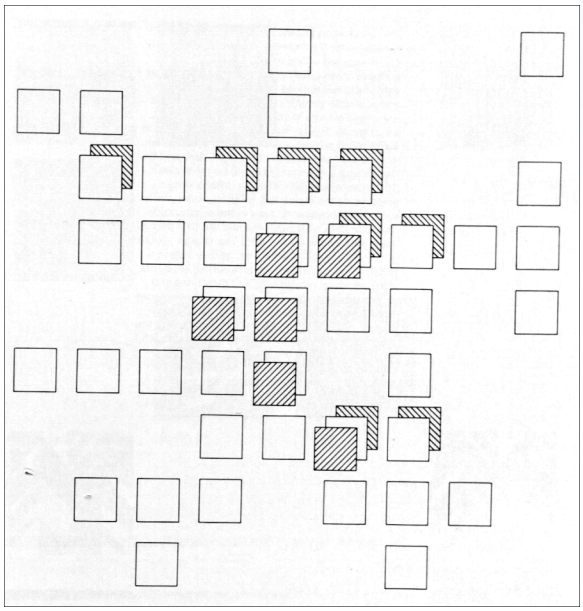

Figure 27. Layering gives a sense of perspective (Maier, 1977)

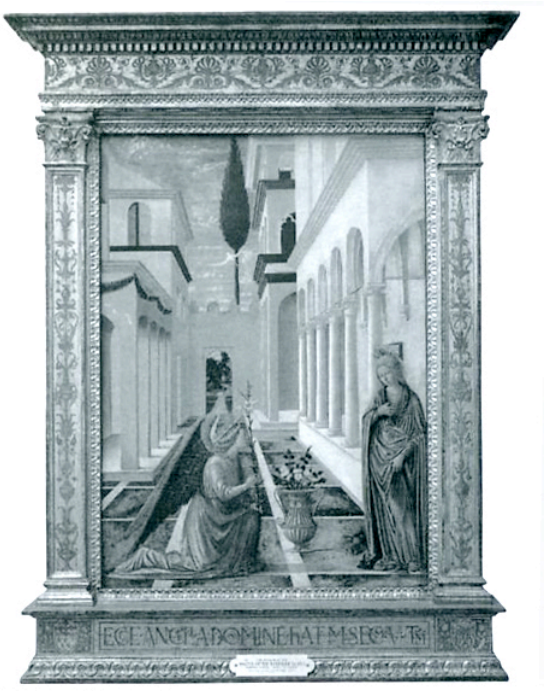

Figure 28. Example of central perspective (Berger, 1989).

Perspective refers to how the viewer is positioned in relation to the world he or she is viewing within the composition. It is the feeling of depth in a two-dimensional plane. This compositional principle was not practiced until around the 15th century, during the Rennaisance period, when artists were actively introducing science into art. The goal of these artists was to increase the realism within their painting.[86]

A simple way to achieve perspective is to layer objects on top of one another, as in Figure 27. In this figure, the overlapping squares gives the feeling that those in front are closer to the viewer than those behind. This feeling of perspective can be made more effective by altering the scale of objects in the foreground and background to give a greater sense of distance. Renaissance artists discovered that the feeling of perspective is most

[86] Sturken, 2001; pp. 113.

effective when all lines within a composition are directed towards at least one vanishing point, and all objects in the composition recede in size as they get closer to that vanishing point.[87] When there is one vanishing point, it is called central perspective, such as in Figure 28. Two vanishing points would be two-point perspective.

Similarity is when visual components are grouped together because they share common characteristics, such as a common shape, size or scale, color, and direction. When the visual components are *contrasted* in terms of shape, size, color, or direction, it creates a kind of visual variety and can create a more interesting composition. This contrast can also create a number of effects within the viewer. Large objects may appear overwhelming or threatening, while small objects may appear fragile, or precious.[88]

Social Semantics

The visual and compositional principles of an image can have an important impact on an image's meaning or interpretation. This is the focus of social semantics, which looks at how these elements, such as proximity, similarity, perspective, and color, can create a social relationship between the viewer, who takes the position of the camera lens, and the image. This relationship can be determined by the intimacy, power balance, and emotional appeal and identification between the viewer and subject, as well as the naturalism and truthfulness of the photograph overall.

The principle of proximity comes into play when gauging the intimacy between the viewer and the subject. When the subject is close in proximity to the viewer it suggests a

[87] Sturken, 2001; pp. 113.
[88] Cheatham, 1987; pp. 26.

personal relationship. When the subject is distant in proximity to the viewer, it suggests an impersonal relationship between the two. The type of shot—close up, medium, or long—relates to the distance between the viewer or camera and the subject. Different types of shots can have different connotations. A close up shot, one that shows the subject's head and shoulders or less, suggests an intimate or personal relationship between the viewer and depicted subject. A medium shot, one that cuts off between the waist and knees of the subject, suggests a social relationship. A long shot, one that portrays the full figure of the subject in the frame, suggests an impersonal relationship.[89]

The subject's *gaze* – the degree to which the subject is facing the camera, can also affect the relationship between that subject and the viewer. When the subject is directly facing the camera – his or her shoulders are square to the lens – it is as if the subject is facing directly towards the viewer, suggesting a symbolic involvement between the two. When the subject is facing away from the camera, he or she is no longer facing the viewer and that level of involvement goes down.[90]

Eye contact can affect the power of the gaze. When the subject is looking directly at the camera it connects that subject with the viewer, suggesting a more personal relationship. By looking at the camera, and thereby the viewer, the subject is making a visual form of a direct address, *demanding* that the viewer enter into a relationship.[91] This relationship can be further affected and defined by other signs given, such as what type of facial expression the subject has. When the subject is looking away from the camera and viewer, there is no

[89] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 146.
[90] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 146.
[91] Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; pp. 60.

contact made between the viewer and subject, no personal relationship, and the subject becomes more of an 'object' to be looked at.[92]

The proximity between the camera and the subject can also have an effect on that subject's individuality. Increasing the distance between the subject and the lens makes it more difficult to discern individual features of the subject. This phenomenon is called *distancing*, and reduces the overall individuality, and thus objectifies, the subject.[93]

The individuality of a photographed subject can also be reduced using the principle of similarity. The way subjects interact with other subjects within a composition can have a particular meaning. Depicting people with similarities in groups rather than individually reinforces *generalization*, which causes typification, or being labeled as a type rather than an individual. This can be done through depicting subjects with similar dress, such as a group of soldiers wearing the same style of uniform, as seen in Figure 6, or by depicting individuals in the same behavioral act or pose—such as walking in the same direction.[94]

Categorization is when similarity goes beyond the composition, creating likenesses between subjects and stereotypes. In categorization, a person becomes devoid of their individuality and becomes subject to typification, often through the use of visual stereotypes. These stereotypes may be made up of cultural attributes—such as clothing, hairstyles, associated objects—or physiognomic attributes—such as hair color or body shape. When these cultural or physiognomic attributes are emphasized more than the individual features of the depicted person, that person has a greater chance at being labeled as a 'type.'[95]

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[92] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 96.
[93] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 96.
[94] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 94
[95] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 95.

The point of view of the viewer can create a power relationship between him or her and the subject. The point of view of the viewer translates into the positioning of the camera lens to the subject. On a vertical axis, this angle can suggest a social hierarchy between the viewer and the subject within the photograph. A shot from a low angle, looking up at the subject translates into the viewer being on a lower level and looking up at the subject as a child would to a parent, or a peasant to a king on a throne. The subject sits in a position of power over the viewer. A shot from above, with the viewer looking down at the subject, reverses this relationship and puts the viewer in the position of power and the subject in the position of inferiority or weakness. When the subject is on the same level as the camera and viewer, it suggests an equal social position.

Social semantics also looks at the naturalness or truthfulness of an image – described as the concept of 'modality' by Van Leeuwen and Jewitt.[96] To determine the modality of an image is to determine whether the image is socially accepted as capturing a real event in time, or if it is accepted as fantasy or a caricature. The modality of an image can have an effect on an image's believability. An image that is of high modality is one that is at the level of what is socially considered the most real or natural form of visual representation for that context—it is believable. This visual representation is not necessarily closest to an actual representation of real life and depends on the context in which it is viewed. For example, a technical, scientific line drawing that has little extraneous information, such as shading, texture or perspective, may be of higher modality in the scientific world than a photograph. This is because the realism, or naturalism, is based on whether the subject can be measured,

[96] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 151

used, experimented with. Details such as texture and perspective are considered extraneous, and therefore lessen the modality of the image.

The modality of the visual representation can also differ between cultures and time periods. For example, the Egyptians may have considered hieroglyphics the most truthful method of representation, in the 15th century it was the perspective painting; in the mainstream today it is photorealism, or an image captured by a standard camera. The level of photorealism can be affected by a number of factors, including color, representation and perspective.

The modality of a photographic image's color can depend on the saturation, which is the strength of color in an image (described above), and can range from no saturation (a black and white image) to over-saturation. The optimum saturation, and thus highest modality, is one that is close to the saturation of a standard 35mm photograph. Photographs that have less saturation, as in Figure 17, can appear ghostly, or less than real, while photographs that are over saturated, as in Figure 16, may appear exaggerated. The modality of an image can also be affected by the image's color differentiation, or how great the range of colors is used—from monochrome to full color. Images that use one or two colors are at the lower end of the modality scale, and thus less real, than images that use a full range of colors.[97]

The representation of a photographic image refers to the level of detail used to depict the subject. In photography, the focus and exposure can affect the overall detail of an image. One that is hazy or fuzzy can be interpreted as less real, and thus lower in modality, than one that is in focus. However, images captured with a 35mm camera are expected to have some

[97] Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; pp. 165.

variation in focus within the image—if the camera is focused on an image in the foreground, the background is expected to have lost some degree of detail. If both the foreground and the background are in complete focus the image does not look natural. Therefore, it is possible that an image's representation can be 'more than real.'[98]

Perspective, as described above, can be achieved by simply layering objects, altering scale to give a sense of distance between the foreground and background, or to direct all lines in a composition towards a vanishing point. Each of these methods differ in the resulting naturalness and overall modality of an image. At the lowest end of the modality range, at just higher than no perspective at all, is the simple layering of objects (Figure 27). Using scale to represent distance between objects is higher in modality. The most realistic use of perspective, and thus highest in modality, is central perspective.[99] This is when all lines converge at a single, central vanishing point. Extreme perspective, such as that obtained using a fisheye lens, is at the opposite end of the range, beyond central perspective, and is considered 'more than real'.[100]

[98] Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; pp. 151.
[99] Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; pp. 166.
[100] Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; pp. 167.

METHODOLOGY

Development of a categorizing tool for visual framing

This chapter documents the development of a categorizing tool for visual framing. The tool is centered on criteria established by the research on the visual framing elements described in the previous chapter. The focus of the research was on how an image can create a social relationship between the subject of the photograph and the viewer. This is also the focus of the proposed tool; any visual framing elements that do not affect this relationship were not included. Each visual framing element described in the tool is described by a series of photos. These photos were selected for their news/editorial nature as well as their relevance to the framing element being described. The number of photos needed per visual framing element depended on the nature of the element being described. In some cases, two photos showing the two possible extremes of the framing element were enough explanation. In other cases when the framing element is likely to be rated somewhere between the two extremes, three photos were needed to show how the element could be rated on a sliding scale.

In the newsroom, journalists employ various tactics in order connect to their audience and enhance the understanding of a certain topic or event. These tactics include using particular grammar and vocabulary that sets a tone for the story. These choices can make a story clinical or heartwarming, combative or supportive. This tone-setting function of the grammar and vocabulary is called framing, and is at the forefront of academic discussion about journalism. It was discussed in detail Chapter 1.

The tactics used by journalists to increase interest among their audience also include choosing particular visual imagery to engage the reader and set the tone for the subsequent reading of the news story. This imagery can serve as the initial contact with the reader (see Chapter 1 on newspaper viewing habits) and can also play a part in setting the tone for the rest of the news story. As discussed in the previous chapter, the tone of an image can be set through the presence of certain visual signifying elements, which are similar in function to grammar and vocabulary used within a text. Chapter 1 also discussed how the fields of semiotics and design have studied how these signifying elements can include the use of visual principles, such as color and contrast; how the subject interacts with the camera; how the subject is positioned in relation to the camera; and how symbols or people are photographed alongside the subject. Like the choice of vocabulary, the signifying elements can set a frame for viewing.

The discussion of visual imagery as a framing device is rare within journalism research. This is perhaps due to the profession's roots in the written word. As the world of journalism continues to adapt and take advantage of new visual-oriented media, such as the Internet, it is necessary that images receive more attention during the creation of a news story. When the journalist combines a strong image frame with a strong textual frame s/he strengthens the intended message to be delivered to the audience. When used successfully, the two frames can reinforce each other, narrowing down the possible interpretations and creating a much stronger message. When used unsuccessfully, the frames do not compliment one another, leading to the audience receiving differing, and sometimes contradicting, messages. To reduce the chance of this contradiction occurring, it is necessary to increase the awareness of how an image can play a part in the framing of a subject, as well as to

emphasize the importance of the decision concerning which image is chosen to accompany the text. These can be accomplished through the use of a newly developed “categorizing tool”. This tool deconstructs the decision process and essentially guides journalists through the detection and classification of the signifying elements of an image, allowing them to determine the appropriateness of images in order to select one that matches the intended frame. This chapter focuses on the development of a prototype of this tool.

Informing a journalist of the power of visuals would increase awareness of an image’s importance in a journalism setting. This task of informing is accomplished through the use of an instructional tool that describes the criteria to evaluate framing in a news media image. This tool, which takes the form of a brochure, aims to guide the journalist through the process of identifying and rating the presence of visual framing components. This process would be valuable when choosing images prior to print or, if time is limited due to the chaotic and hurried nature of the newsroom, as a way of reflecting on how images have been used in on past coverage. In either case, the process described within the tool will work and will help determine whether or not an image is appropriate for the text.

There are three expectations that the proposed tool would need to meet in order to be useful in a newsroom or other journalistic environment. The first and most vital expectation is that it would need to guide users through the important framing elements of a visual image, as described in Chapter 1. This could be accomplished by providing a clear and straightforward definition of each framing element, in addition to showing a range of images that display the various instances of the element.

The second expectation is that the most appropriately framed image could be determined from within a group of possible options. Photographers often take numerous

photographs of an event, resulting in a number of images with unique compositions, signifying elements, and overall frame. It is necessary to give the journalist the essential knowledge to be able to choose the most appropriately framed image. The proposed tool does that.

The third expectation is that the guide would be well designed and easy to follow. This is accomplished by presenting the information in a logical format and in a language that is not overly academic and avoids the use of jargon. This would greatly increase the comprehension for someone without intimate knowledge of framing and visual research. Using graphic design principles in order to create a clear, easy-to-use presentation could further increase this comprehension.

Description of the tool

An instructional tool, in the form of a brochure, can introduce the topic of visual framing, and inform the journalist about the process that needs to be followed to successfully identify a visual frame. The purpose of this guide is to identify the various framing elements of an image and provide a step-by-step process to assist the journalist. This guide is divided into three major sections: an introduction, the process, and a conclusion.

Booklet Introduction

The introduction of the booklet is meant to give the user the foundational knowledge upon which the subsequent process is based. To begin with, the guide introduces the topic by explaining how important a photograph is to a news story, and how different images can create a different account of an event depending on their content. When a journalist chooses a

photo in an effort to reinforce a particular aspect of an event or situation, perhaps with the goal of appealing to readers, he or she is practicing the art of framing. Within the introduction this process of framing is described.

Because this guide is targeted towards those users who do not have an extensive visual background, the introduction also includes a brief summary of the process as well as a group of general terms used frequently throughout the guide. It also prepares them to gauge whether a photo is appropriate by asking the user to determine what the target frame is by reviewing the text portion of the story. It is this target frame that will be compared to the frame of the photos during the process below in order to determine whether or not the photo is appropriately framed.

what is the purpose of this guide?

A journalist's job is a complex one. In just a few words, a journalist must attract and interest a reader enough to keep him reading. This is no easy task. It takes careful planning of what and how to say something that is informative and yet still appealing. It might take a bold headline, a powerful lead-in sentence or a powerful photo to catch the reader's attention. This guide is focused on the latter—the photo.

Images can say a lot. The right photo for a news story can serve as the perfect visual compliment to the text. It can support, reinforce and enhance the verbal message, creating a very powerful and informative account. However, the wrong photo can do the opposite and work against the text, making the overall message muddled or confused. So how do you know which photo is the right one? This guide will tell you.

This guide will tell you exactly how an image's message can change depending on how the image is composed, and how the journalist can choose the right image for a news story. This guide will describe the process of deciding whether or not a certain image is appropriate for a story, one that supports the message and attitude of the text. This process could be used either prior to print, when choosing a photo to run in a story, or afterwards as a method of reflection on past coverage. Either way, this guide will describe how to determine whether an image that is *framed* in the most appropriate way.

Figure 29. Booklet introduction

Framing... what is it?

Most journalists, have heard the word "framing" before, as it is a major focus in media studies. Theorists define framing as when a communicator uses certain treatments, decisions or procedures in order to increase the salience of, or highlight, certain parts of a text, concept, or issue. In simpler terms, framing basically involves the decisions made during the process of constructing a news story—decisions made when orgainizing information, attempting to attract readers, or setting a mood. The process typically involves answering such questions as: what information should be included; what information should be left out; and how should the information be presented. The frame news story is commonly refered to as the slant, angle, or perspective.

So how does framing relate to images?
The journalist frames a news story by presenting information in a certain way. Depending on how the journalist presents that information, the same story could be clinical or heartwarming, combative or supportive. This can be done with photography as well. Depending on how an individual is captured on film, he or she can be framed in numerous ways. A person may appear friendly, concerned, or even threatening based on how the camera and individual were positioned when the shutter clicked.

The photographer does the actual act of framing a photograph—he or she is the one that selects what appears in the camera's viewfinder. The photographer is the one who is using the camera to focus attention onto one aspect of a scene or capturing a person in a certain pose, act, or displaying a certain kind of emotion. But, ideally, the journalist is the one who chooses which of the photographer's photos is printed alongside the story. Because of this, a journalist needs to make an informed decision about which photo to choose. The story needs a photo that enhances it, not one that works against its message.

Figure 30. Booklet introduction

Before beginning the process

This guide is an effort to make sure the most appropriate image is being printed alongside a news story. It presents a method that can be followed in order to determine whether the photo/s in question are the best match for the overall intended frame of the news story. In order to be able to do this, it is first essential to determine that intended frame. This frame can be determined by reviewing the text. What is the angle of the story? What is being said? How is it being said? Once the intended frame of the story is established, the process for determining the frame of the image can begin.

The process of determining the frame of an image is simple and involves only answering a few questions about the photos in question. This guide describes what these questions are, provides the information necessary to be able to answer them, and, because it is likely the answers are not definite yes or no's, will provide the scale that includes the range of possible outcomes.

Key Terms

Before diving into how an image can frame an issue, a few key terms should be clarified.

Primary Subject: This guide focuses on the representation of the primary subject, which is easy to identify. When you look at a photo, just say to yourself "this is a picture of _____." Fill in that black with whoever, or whatever, seems to be the focus of the camera.

Viewer: This word has already been used frequently, and will continue to be used in the following pages. The term 'viewer' does not necessarily refer to you, the journalist who knows about the subjects within an image, but rather refers to your readers, to whom you are probably presenting your information to for the first time.

Framing: Decisions you make to organize information, attract your reader, and set a mood.

Figure 31. Booklet introduction

The process

The second section, which outlines the process of identifying the framing elements, is structured in a sequence of four questions formulated using information found in framing research. 1) Did the subject relate to the viewer in the appropriate way? 2) Was the subject associated with the appropriate group or things? 3) Did the subject have the appropriate presence? 4) Was the 'look' of the photograph appropriate?

1) Does the subject relate to the viewer in the appropriate way? The first question asks the journalist if the subject relates to the viewer in the appropriate way. The answer to this question can be found by looking at the proximity of the subject to the camera and whether or not the subject is making eye contact with the viewer.

Chapter 1 discusses how a subject's portrayal is affected by his or her proximity to the viewer. The distance between the camera and the dominant subject determines the social intimacy between that subject and the viewer. When the camera is close to the subject, the subject's shoulders and head (or less) are shown in the frame and an intimate or personal relationship is suggested. This relationship is similar to one you may have with a loved one. In contrast, a long shot, or one that portrays the full figure of the subject in the frame, suggests a highly impersonal relationship. This relationship would be similar to one that you may have with a complete stranger.

The reason for this difference in the relationship status is because as the subject moves farther away from the camera, his or her individuality decreases. One quality of an intimate relationship is that one can discern certain characteristics that make a loved one unique. Translated into a photograph, these characteristics are the unique qualities of the

Figure 32. Subjects at far distance (AP Photo via Yahoo! News, March 19, 2008.)

Figure 33. Subjects at medium distance (REUTERS via Yahoo! News, March 19, 2008)

Figure 34. Subject at close distance (REUTERS via Yahoo! News, March 19, 2008)

subject that are only discerned when that subject is close to the camera—for example wrinkles, freckles, eye color, etc. As the subject moves farther away from the camera these unique characteristics are harder to see, decreasing the intimacy level. When the individualism of the subject decreases, the objectification, or viewing the subject as an object or type with no unique or identifying characteristics, increases.

For example, in Figure 32, the demonstrators in the photo are shown at some distance from the viewer. It is difficult to view individual characteristics of each demonstrator. Because of this, the demonstrators have an impersonal relationship with the viewer and seem to be a collective group and are viewed as an overall type instead of as individuals. In Figure 33, which is a closer shot of a group of demonstrators, the personal relationship is more intimate, the individual features of the subjects are more evident, and the subjects are beginning to be seen more as individuals than as a type. In Figure 34, the individual is shown in full frame, the personal relationship is very intimate, his individual features are very evident, and the demonstrator is now completely individual and no longer a type.

The terms ‘individual’ and ‘type’, used to describe the portrayal of the subject, are from the visual research described in Chapter 1. Because the proposed guide is targeted towards the practicing journalist and not someone well versed in the elements of visual framing, it will be necessary to avoid sounding overly academic and use terms that are more universally known. To do this, the terms ‘individual’ and ‘type’ are described instead using the analogy of loved ones and strangers.

Another way the relationship between the subject within the photograph and the viewer of the photograph can be affected is by the subject’s gaze, or whether or not the

subject is making eye contact with the viewer. If the subject is positioned facing the camera, and looking directly at the lens, he or she is basically looking directly at the viewer (see Figure 35). This creates an interaction between the two and suggests a personal relationship. If the subject is facing away from the camera and not acknowledging its presence, thereby not acknowledging the viewer's presence, it suggests an impersonal relationship (see Figure 36). This can also have an effect on individualization. When there is no eye contact, there is little interaction between the viewer and the dominant subject of the image. The viewer becomes an invisible observer and the subject becomes more like an object to be observed.

Figure 35. Example of eye contact with the subject. (via corbis.com)

Figure 36. Example of no eye contact with the subject (corbis.com)

Does the subject relate to the viewer in the appropriate way?

Once the intended frame has been determined by reviewing the text, the first question to ask yourself is: How should the subject to relate to the audience, as a stranger or a close friend? The answer to this question can have an effect on how the audience views the subject. Much like a stranger on the street, a subject depicted as a stranger in a photograph would not receive the same amount of the viewer's interest or concern as a subject depicted as a close acquaintance. So how do you know if you are looking at a stranger or friend? Look at two things: 1) is the subject of the photo positioned close to the camera or far away? And 2) Is there eye contact between you and the subject in the photograph?

Camera distance

How far the subject is from the camera relates to our own real-life "social bubbles", or the comfortable distance between ourselves and another person, depending on how close our relationship is to that person. Two strangers typically stand a fair distance apart when speaking to each other. When this distance is too close, we often feel awkward or uncomfortable. When speaking to a close friend, this comfortable distance is much shorter. When speaking to a loved one, this distance is even shorter. This can be translated into a photograph.

When a subject is photographed at a far distance, meaning almost their whole body is visible in the photograph it recreates the relationship the viewer may have with a stranger. When a subject is shot at a medium distance, meaning they are shown from the waist and up, it recreates the comfort-

In this photograph, the subjects are far away from the camera, reducing the visible detail. This reduces the intimacy of the relationship.

In this photograph, the subjects are at a medium distance to the camera, The intimacy is higher than above.

In this photograph, the subject is close to the camera, allowing the viewer to really see the emotion and detail in the face, creating a more intimate relationship.

Figure 37. Booklet section: Does the subject relate to the viewer in the appropriate way?

able distance a viewer may have with a friend. When the subject is shown even closer and only their head and shoulders are in the frame of view, it recreates the relationship you may have with a loved one. A close distance to the camera can also help the viewer relate to the subject by revealing greater detail. Often we can identify loved ones by their unique physical characteristics such as birthmarks or dimples. These characteristics are usually not noticed in strangers. This is also true for people portrayed in photographs. As the subject gets closer to the camera, individual features of the subject can start to be seen. These individual features can be used to help identify the person, make them unique, and creates a more intimate relationship between the subject of the photograph and the viewer.

In this photograph, the eye contact creates an interaction between the subject and the viewer.

In this photograph, the lack of eye contact reduces the intimacy of this close relationship.

Eye Contact

When there is eye contact the closeness between the viewer and the subject is even greater. Think about how we use eye contact in the real world—to get the attention of a waiter, to share a knowing glance, to show someone we are listening. Eye contact creates a connection between two people. This can be translated into a photograph. When a subject is looking at the viewer, he or she is making eye contact and, in a way, acknowledging the viewer's presence and creating an interaction. Eye contact can affect a relationship already set by the camera distance—the lack of eye contact can reduce the intimacy of a close relationship, or it can heighten the intimacy of a distant relationship.

RATE YOUR IMAGES

Are your own images appropriately framed? Follow these simple steps:

1. Review the frame of the text.

2. Review the relationship of the subject to the viewer. Is it that of a stranger or friend? Is the eye contact direct or not?

3. Using the scale below, rate how appropriate the image frame is to the text frame.
Use the following scale:

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5
not appropriate ◂ neutral ▸ very appropriate

Figure 38. Booklet section: Does the subject relate to the viewer in the appropriate way?

2) Is the subject associated with the right group or things? The second question in the process asks the user to determine whether or not the subject is associated with the right group or things. This question looks at the generalization and categorization of the subject, as well as the connotation of forms depicted within the photograph, which were discussed in Chapter 1.

Generalization has an effect on the individuality of a subject in a photograph. It involves how the subject interacts with others within the image. When the subject has similarities to others in a group, such as by depicting them with similar dress or behavioral act or pose, the subject is seen as part of that group, and not as an individual. The subject becomes typified, meaning he or she is labeled as a type with little to no unique characteristics. Any qualities associated with that group are automatically associated with the subject as well. For example, when a group of people are photographed crossing the street during rush hour (Figure 39), the group is seen as a collective type, whether it be pedestrians or rushed New Yorkers, rather than as individuals. If, for example, one person was walking against the flow, and therefore is in contrast to the majority, attention is called to that lone person and s/he is seen as more of an individual.

Figure 39. Example of high generalization. (Corbis.com)

Categorization is when similarity goes beyond the photograph and suggests likenesses between the subject and a cultural stereotype. When a person is associated with a stereotype, he or she takes on the qualities of that stereotype and loses his or her own identity. For example, Figure 40 is a photograph of a woman dressed in a nun's habit holding a candle. Because of the way this woman is dressed, she is categorized as a nun and is given the traits that the viewer's culture generally associates with one, such as faithful, strict, kind, etc. These traits are seen before any individual traits that woman may have. She then loses her individuality and becomes seen more as a type and more like a stranger.

Figure 40. Example of categorization. (AP News via Yahoo! News, March 21, 2008)

The connotation of other symbols or elements photographed alongside the subject can also have an effect on the viewer's interpretation of that subject. Symbols can carry a great amount of meaning that can lead to associations within the viewer's mind. These associations can range from very positive to very negative. For example, if a subject is photographed

alongside a swastika (Figure 41), a symbol that carries strong negative associations in Western culture, it is possible that these associations could be transferred to the subject. This may lead the viewer to interpret that subject in a negative way. If the subject is photographed alongside an element with a positive connotation, such as a smiling child (Figure 42), it is possible that the subject would be viewed in a more positive light.

Figure 41. Example of negative connotation. (via corbis.com)

Figure 42. Example of positive connotation (AFP via Yahoo! News, March 22, 2008)

Is the subject associated with the appropriate group or symbols?

With a photograph, we are not able to form an opinion about a subject based on speaking or interacting with him or her, we must base our opinion on what we see. This opinion is based on our associations with what we see the subject wearing, doing, or where the photograph is taken. If we see a man wearing a police uniform, we automatically associate him with a larger police organization. If we see a group of people who are all laughing we typically assume that they are together. These associations can be caused by similarities between a subject and others within a photograph, similarities between the subject and known stereotypes, or associations between the subject and depicted symbols within the photograph.

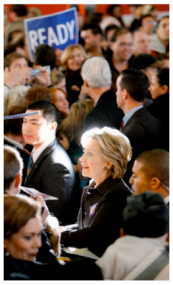
When there are similarities between a subject and others within the photograph, for example they are all walking in the same direction, this can lower the individuality or uniqueness of the subject. This is called generalization. The subject is no longer seen as a unique individual and becomes part of the group. That subject also takes on whatever characteristics may be attributed to that group. If the group appears to be disruptive, the subject is also assumed to be disruptive.

When there are similarities between the subject and a known stereotype, the associations with that stereotype tend to overpower the subject's own individual characteristics. This is called categorization. For example, if a subject is wearing clothing generally associated with a group of people who are considered militant, the subject becomes militant in the viewer's mind.

Symbols can carry an incredible amount of meaning that, when depicted in a photograph alongside the subject, can have a great effect on a viewer's attitude toward a person. For example, a subject depicted alongside a swastika, an extremely negative symbol in our time, would be attributed with many of the symbol's negative associations.

This image is an example of generalization, the people walking across the road are seen as a collective group rather than individuals because they are walking in the same direction.

Figure 43. Booklet section: Is the subject associated with the appropriate group or symbols?



In the above three photographs, the associations with the American flag and the podium—patriotism and leadership— are more positive for someone running for president than the sign that says "ready". Both are more positive than the associations made with the symbol of the devil shown in the third photogrpah.

This image is an example of categorization, a viewer may attach associations to the group as a result of their hairstyles and dress.

RATE YOUR IMAGES

Are your own images appropriately framed? Follow these simple steps:

1. Review the frame of the text.
2. Review the frame of the image. Does it use generalization? Categorization? Are there symbols present and do they cause positive or negative associations?
3. Using the scale below, rate how appropriate the image frame is for the text frame.
   Use the following scale:

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5
not appropriate ◂ neutral ▸ very appropriate

Figure 44. Booklet section: Is the subject associated with the appropriate group or symbols?

3) Does the subject have the appropriate presence? The third question in the process asks the user to decide whether or not the subject has the appropriate presence for the text it is seen with. To answer this, the user must look at the power level and the body language of the subject within the photograph.

According to framing literature, the power level of the subject is determined by the viewer's point of view, which is translated into the positioning of the camera lens in relation to the subject. The position of the lens can suggest a social hierarchy between the viewer and the subject within the photograph. A shot from a low angle, looking up at the subject translates into the viewer being on a lower level and looking up at someone in power. The subject sits in a position of power over the viewer. A shot from above, with the viewer looking down at the subject, reverses this relationship and puts the viewer in the position of power and the subject in the position of inferiority or weakness. When the subject is on the same level as the camera (and viewer) it suggests an equal social position. This hierarchy can have an affect on the interpretation of the subject. Take, for example, Figures 45, 46 and 47, which all depict similar looking policemen holding machine guns. In each photograph the uniform, gun, and posture are all very similar and create an authoritative presentation of the subjects. But the authority of the policeman differs among each photo due to the angle at which it was taken. In Figure 45, the policeman is photographed from above, as if the viewer of the photograph was looking down on the policeman. This makes the subject appear less authoritative than if the viewer was looking straight on at the policeman (Figure 46). In Figure 47 the authority of the policeman is enhanced because the viewer is looking from an inferior position up at the policeman.

Figure 45. Example of low power. (corbis.com)

Figure 46. Example of neutral power. (corbis.com)

Figure 47. Example of high power. (corbis.com)

The body language of the subject photographed can have an effect on the viewer's interpretation. When a shutter clicks in the camera, it does not discern between a flattering and an unflattering pose. This can create various portrayals of the subject that could be seen as either positive or negative, depending on the context of image. For example, if a story was about how George W. Bush is leading the country, Figure 48, depicting the president in an authoritative gesture, is a much more positive portrayal of the president than in Figure 49, where he was captured making an odd or somewhat comically menacing face.

Figure 48. Example of positive portrayal. (AP News via Yahoo! News, March 21, 2008)

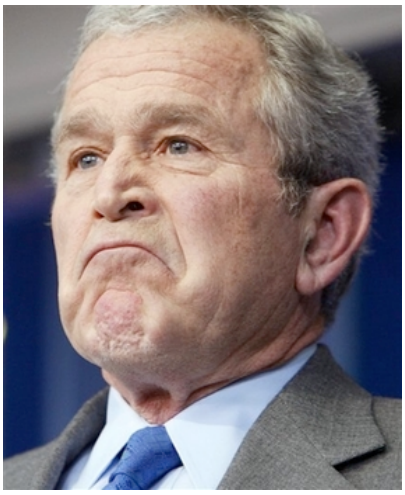


Figure 49. Example of negative portrayal. (AP News via Yahoo! News, March 21, 2008)

The body language of the subject also includes the type of emotion displayed. The type of emotion displayed, whether it is of pain and anguish as shown in Figure 50, or of extreme anger and threat as in Figure 51, can have a great effect on a viewer's interpretation of the subject, depending on whether or not the viewer can be empathetic. To be empathetic towards someone is to be able to understand and share that someone's feelings. If the

emotion displayed by the subject were what the viewer would expect for the situation being described, it is more likely the viewer would be able to empathize with the subject, thus creating a link between the two and making the appropriate interpretation of the subject more likely.

Figure 50. Example of somewhat high empathy (AP via Yahoo! News, March 22, 2008)

Figure 51. Example of high Threat. (AP News via Yahoo! News, March 21, 2008)

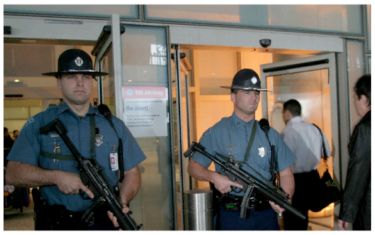
Does the subject have the appropriate presence?

The third question to ask yourself when looking at a photo is does the subject have the *presence* for the point you are trying to make? The presence of someone is how they look, behave, and the aura they are putting out. When constructing a story about an exciting and fun event, you do not want to show a subject who appears subdued or downtrodden. If you want to portray a person as a strong and commanding leader, a photo that positions that person as subordinate and confused would not strengthen your characterization. This is why it is important to make sure your subject's presence is sending the right message. To do this, look at the power level and body language.

The Subject's Power Level

Is your audience supposed to see the subject as someone who is strong, superior, and commanding? Or should the subject be weak, helpless, and inferior? These are questions that deal with the subject's power level, and are determined by the angle of the camera. If a camera is pointed up at the subject, so the subject seems to be towering over the viewer, the subject may appear strong, commanding, superior, and with more power. If the camera is above the subject, looking down, the subject is in an inferior position and may appear to have less power. This all relates to how we typically view those in power over us in the real world. When we are young children we are constantly watched over and disciplined by people who stand above us – our parents and teachers. In the government arena, those in power typically address the population from a higher platform—the president stands on a stage behind a podium; a king or queen sits on a throne. It is this phenomenon that is being recreated visually in photographs.

As shown in this image, the camera looks down on the subjects, making them appear less authoritative than they really are.



In this image the officers are photographed on an equal level with the viewer. The camera would have a neutral affect on the subject's power level.

In this image the officer's authority is enhanced by the way the camera looks up at the subject.

Figure 52. Booklet section: Does the subject have the appropriate presence?

The Subject's Body Language

In communication between two people, body language is a powerful tool. Facial expressions and gestures can communicate as much as words. Without words we can communicate happiness, excitement, distress, and much more. In photography, a subject's expressions and gestures can have an affect on how we view that person. They can show a person as interested, upset, concerned, all characteristics that can add to your overall message, as long as they match the context of what you are trying to say. A person shown acting in a way that is not expected for the situation described in the text can cause confusion. For example, for a story about a firm and direct statement made by the president, a photograph depicting the leader with an odd, indecisive or goofy look would contradict the intended message of portraying a man in charge. This may have an negative effect on the perception of the subject (why is he or she making light of such a serious issue) and it may even start to raise questions in the audience about the accuracy of your story.

As shown in these two images, body language can help tell a story. It can show a leader as assertive (left photo) or indecisive (right photo).

RATE YOUR IMAGES

Are your own images appropriately framed? Follow these simple steps:

1. Review the frame of the text.
2. Review the frame of your image. Does the camera angle suggest strength or weakness in the subject? Is the body language appropriate for the text frame?
3. Using the scale below, rate how appropriate the image frame is for the text frame.
   Use the following scale:

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5
not appropriate ◂ neutral ▸ very appropriate

Figure 53. Booklet section: Does the subject have the appropriate presence?

4) Is the 'look' of the photograph appropriate? Question four asks the user whether or not the "look" of the photograph is appropriate. Does it look real? Is it believable? In most cases, a news story would call for an image that depicts a person or event as it happened, with little to no enhancement from exposure or editing techniques. However, this is not always the case, as some stories would benefit from a less than natural image. This question asks the user to first gauge whether or not the story calls for a believable photo, and then look at the color of the photograph, the perspective, and the depth of field to determine if the photo in question is appropriate.

The first part of the question asks the user to gauge the color of the photograph. As described in Chapter 1, the naturalness of an image can have an effect on an image's believability. An image that is deemed to be unnatural, or not likely to actually exist, is less likely to be seen as a credible representation by the viewer and would have less of an impact on the overall frame of the event. The saturation, or intensity of colors, and the differentiation, or the range of colors used, affects the naturalness of an image. The optimum saturation and differentiation level is that of a standard color photograph. A photograph that is very low in saturation, for example a black and white photograph, is seen as less real than one that is of normal saturation. An image that is oversaturated is also seen as less real. An image that has low color differentiation, for example a duotone photograph, is less likely to be seen as less real than an image that has a normal range of colors. For example, in the two photos of Bob Dylan, the color photo (Figure 54) is more natural and life-like than the black and white photograph (Figure 55).

Figure 54. Example of high saturation. (AP Photo via Yahoo! News, March 9, 2008)

Figure 55. Example of low saturation. (AP Photo/Sony BMG via Yahoo! News, March 9, 2008)

Question four also asks the user to look at the depth of field, which is concerned with the focus and sharpness of photograph. A standard color photograph is expected to have some variations in focus. If the camera is focused on an image in the foreground, those in the background are expected to be slightly out of focus. This is a natural depth of field (Figure 56). If both the foreground and background are completely in focus, the depth of field is deemed unnatural and the image is seen as less than real. There are times when a less naturalistic image can help reinforce a concept. Take, for example, the photo of John McCain in the midst of a crowd (Figure 57). The depth of field in this photo has obviously been exaggerated. This makes it less believable. But, if the story for this image addressed a politician's feelings of isolation on the campaign trail, the image may help reinforce the concept.

Figure 56. Example of high level of naturalism.
(AP Photo via Yahoo! News, March 23, 2008.)

Figure 57. Example of low level of naturalism.
(Reuters via Yahoo! News, March 12, 2008)

Question four also asks the user to gauge the appropriateness of the perspective. The most natural perspective is one that mimics the viewpoint of a person, which is a central perspective with a single, central vanishing point. Any perspective other than this is seen as less natural. For example, in Figure 58, a fisheye lens is used to photograph fans at a baseball game. This effect allows the photographer to create an interesting composition, but does so by creating a very unreal

viewpoint. This image would be seen as less than real. Figure 59 is also a shot of a ballpark that instead uses central perspective, creating a much more natural image.

Figure 58. Example of very unnatural perspective.
(AP Photo via Yahoo! News, February 29, 2008.)

Figure 59. Example of natural perspective.
(AP Photo via Yahoo! News, March 7, 2008.)

Is the 'look' of the photograph appropriate?

The last thing to ask yourself is whether or not the "look" of the photograph is appropriate. Does it look real? Is it believable? Is it an interesting photo? As a journalist, your job is to appeal to and inform your audience of real world events or situations. Sometimes it is crucial that the images appear believable for you to remain credible and successful. Other times the story calls for an image that can reinforce or enhance an overall feeling or concept. In either case, the look of the photo needs to be appropriate for the text. To determine this, consider the color of the image, the perspective and the depth of field.

Color: There was once a time when all news images were black and white. This is definitely not the case anymore. With the introduction of color television and other new digital mediums, as well as advances in printing technology, news images have become quite colorful. Color allows for more realism in images. When an image does not meet the color expectations of the viewer—what we expect to see in a standard color photograph—the image can appear less natural, perhaps even manipulated or fake. This is not good for a journalist who is trying to inform an audience of something that actually happened. For example, the black and white photo may be satisfactory for a biography-type piece about Bob Dylan, but a color photograph would be more appropriate for a story that describes, a recent concert. So, when looking at an image, make sure the color looks appropriate for what you are trying to say.

Perspective: The human eye sees the world in one way—central perspective. Anything other than this appears odd, slightly off, or not of the real world. Judgment is necessary when using an image with an odd perspective. It can sometimes benefit your story by increasing the amount of information provided for your audience, such as in the photograph of the baseball game taken with a fisheye lens (see below). If this story was about how the game brought in a record attendance, the use of the fisheye lens, which distorts the perspective, is a good way to show the crowd. If the story was about the catcher, it would appear odd and unbelievable.

Color can have a great effect on the realism of a photo and whether or not the image is depicting an actual event.

A strange perspective, such as that created by using a fisheye lens, can increase the amount of information available to the viewer, but can also reduce the believability.

Figure 60. Booklet section: is the 'look' of the photograph appropriate?

A natural depth of field can make a photo more believable to the viewer.

The depth of field can also be used to tell a story, but if not used properly, the viewer may not trust the image.

RATE YOUR IMAGES

Are your own images appropriately framed? Follow these simple steps:

1. Review the frame of the story.
2. Review the image frame. Is the color of the image less than natural? The perspective? Depth of field?
3. Using the scale below, rate whether the 'look' of the photos is appropriate for the text frame. *Use the following scale:*

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5
not appropriate ◂ neutral ▸ very appropriate

Depth of Field: The depth of field is the result of the camera lens only being able to focus precisely at one point. Objects closer or farther away from this point appear out of focus. The farther they are from that point, the more out of focus they appear. We generally expect to see a natural depth of field in photography. A photograph may seem odd or unnatural if this depth of field is exaggerated, or missing, making it difficult to convince your audience that the image an accurate representation. There are times when a strange focus can help reinforce a concept. Take, for example, the photo of John McCain in the midst of a crowd (see below). The depth of field in this photo has obviously been exaggerated. This makes it less believable. But, if the story for this image addressed a politician's feelings of isolation on the campaign trail the image may help reinforce the concept. It is important to match your photo to the context of the rest of the story.

Figure 61. Booklet section: is the 'look' of the photograph appropriate.

Booklet Conclusion

The third section of the instructional tool describes what to do once the journalist has gone through the process of identifying the frame of an image. It instructs the user to determine what the ideal photo for his or her story would be. This consists of defining the frame of the news story, and then choosing the photo that best matches this frame. This section also explains that, though the process asks the user to rate the framing elements on a scale, the ultimate goal is to have the user eventually be able to identify a visual's frame without the use of a scale, at a glance. This section also offers other possible uses of the process, such as using it as a reflection tool, allowing the user to go back and look at what has already been published in order to determine how well they have been communicating with their audience. The wrong photo can send a mixed message and can confuse the audience, while the right photo can serve as essential reinforcement.

The final step

The final step of the process is to decide if overall each of the ratings assigned to the photo in each of the previous steps match the needs of the text. It may be necessary to review the written text one more time in order to confirm the intended frame. Once you have done this, review the ratings you have given the photo. Do they indicate that the photo in question is appropriate?.

Before or after the fact

The whole goal of this process is to make sure the right photo is being published alongside the text. As mentioned at the beginning of this booklet, this could mean making sure the photo is appropriate for the text prior to print or broadcast, or as a means of self reflection by reviewing past coverage. In either case, the process can help you get a sense of how well a story is communicating with its audience. The wrong photo can send a mixed message, and confuse, while the right photo can serve as essential reinforcement.

Figure 62. Booklet section: The final step.

Chapter 4

FUTURE PROJECTIONS

Chapter One discussed the power of certain signifying elements within an image have over the portrayal of the depicted subject. These elements, which lead to image framing, are often discussed within visual research, but rarely within journalism research. Journalism research generally focuses on the framing tendencies of the text. This study was meant to bridge that gap between the two areas by addressing the framing elements of an image.

A news story is seldom without an accompanying visual. Visuals can help explain, clarify, and reinforce the text of a news story. When the frames of the text and photo compliment each other and work together it can strengthen the overall message. When successfully paired, text and photo can reinforce each other and narrow down the audience's possible interpretations of the message. When unsuccessfully paired, meaning the frames of the text and photo do not match, the two can contradict each other and hinder the overall communication process. To reduce the chances of this contradiction occurring, the journalist should be informed of how the composition of an image can have an effect on the subject's portrayal, which can be done by giving journalists a tool that helps them choose the best image for their purpose. In this study, this tool took the form of an instructional brochure.

This tool consisted of a brochure that was divided into three parts: an introduction that explained the concept of framing; a process section that took the reader through the framing elements of an image; and a conclusion that briefly described how to interpret the results and what to do next. This tool simplifies the process of interpreting the visual framing

elements in a way that does not sound overly academic. It is successful in describing the process of framing to its intended target—a journalist.

This tool focuses on the framing implications of the visual image and how that affects the social relationship between the subject of the photograph and the viewer. Because of this narrow focus, there are some areas that could be expanded upon to create a much more complete instructional tool. In the future, this tool could be expanded to describe the elements of a textual frame. The overall process is meant to determine how well an image meets the needs of the news story, done by asking the journalist to rate how appropriate the image is for the text. The process begins by asking the journalist to define the frame of the text, and then to go back to this initial definition when trying to determine whether the photo in question is appropriate. If the journalist does not adequately describe the frame of the text it can lead to problems in the following steps of the process. In the future, these problems could be avoided by expanding the tool to include the framing implications of the written word.

This focus of the tool could also be expanded to go beyond the social relationship between subject and viewer. For this study, the process and research behind it has a major focus on the interaction between the subject of a photograph and the viewer. The process assumes that the subjects of the photographs in question are human. The research behind the tool is concerned with social relationships and how we interact with each other. This interaction would be different, or at least have additional factors, if the dominant subject was an animal or an inanimate object. Examination of the symbolic significance of objects, colors, and other elements beyond the human, which can be found in visual literature, can broaden the focus of the tool.

The initial intention of the tool was to inform the journalist how to choose an image to go with a text. This tool outlines a process that the journalist could follow when choosing an image prior to print or broadcast, or as a means of self-reflection. But this act of informing does not have to be limited to the newsroom. The overall goal of the proposed instructional booklet is intended to inform the journalist of the framing implications of a visual image. It is meant to raise awareness and the importance of the image during the overall news reporting process. The act of informing could occur either in the newsroom, as originally intended, or in the classroom. The topic of framing is already discussed within journalism college courses, and this booklet could serve as the introduction to the framing power of a visual image within one of these classes. It could also be a valuable addition to the training of a journalist prior to entering the newsroom atmosphere.

This tool, and the process it describes, could also go beyond the newsroom and classroom and be used as the basis for media research concerning the framing of images. It could serve as the basic framework upon which researchers build to identify and analyze visual frames in news media images. This could lead to the exposure of patterns in the visual portrayal of subjects within the media. Further investigation can then be made into the effect of images on a viewer's interpretation of a news story, a viewer's attitude toward a certain topic or person, and an image's effect on an entire society. This proposed guidebook is only the first step into identifying the possible power of the image in the media.

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